

IN THE CLAIMS

Please amend the claims as follows:

Claim 1 (Original): A process for preparing benzoic esters whose alkoxy groups have from 7 to 13 carbon atoms by reacting benzoic acid with at least one alcohol having from 7 to 13 carbon atoms, the water of reaction formed being removed from the reaction mixture during the esterification reaction by distillation with the alcohol used in excess, and the alcohol not converted in the esterification reaction being removed after the esterification reaction,

characterized

in that the reaction takes place in the presence of a tin(II) compound as catalyst at a temperature of 160 to 250°C and in that, without treatment with a base, the catalyst and/or its tin-containing derivatives are removed by filtering or by centrifuging from the reaction mixture which remains after the unconverted alcohol has been separated off, to an extent such that the tin content of the end product (filtrate) is below 1 mg/kg (ppm) and in that alcohols used are heptanols, 1-octanol, 2-octanol, 2-ethylhexanol, nonanols and/or tridecanols.

Claim 2 (Original): The process of claim 1,

characterized

in that a mixture of alcohols with the same or different number of carbon atoms is used.

Claim 3 (Currently Amended): The process of claim 1-~~or~~ 2,

characterized

in that the unconverted alcohol is removed by stripping, distilling or steam-distillation or by a combination of two or more of these methods.

Claim 4 (Currently Amended): The process of at least one of claims 1 to 3,
characterized
in that the unconverted alcohol is separated off after the esterification reaction by
vacuum distillation and subsequent stripping with steam or nitrogen.

Claim 5 (Currently Amended): The process of at least one of claims 1 to 4,
characterized
in that the catalyst is separated off at a temperature below 160°C.

Claim 6 (Currently Amended): The process of at least one of claims 1 to 5,
characterized
in that the catalyst and/or derivative(s) thereof is/are separated off from the reaction
mixture, after the alcohol has been separated off and without base treatment, by filtration at
temperatures below 130°C.

Claim 7 (Currently Amended): The process of at least one of claims 1 to 6,
characterized
in that the volume of liquid removed from the reaction mixture during the
esterification by (azeotropic) distillation is made up in whole or in part with the reactant
alcohol or reactant alcohol mixture.

Claim 8 (Currently Amended): The process of at least one of claims 1 to 6,
characterized

in that the volume of liquid removed from the reaction mixture during the esterification by (azeotropic) distillation is partly recycled, by separation of the liquid separated off into an aqueous phase and an organic phase, and recycling of the organic phase into the esterification reaction.

Claim 9 (Currently Amended): The process of ~~at least one of claims 1 to 6~~, characterized

in that the volume of liquid removed from the reaction mixture during the esterification by (azeotropic) distillation is made up in whole or in part, by separation of the liquid separated off into an aqueous phase and an organic phase and recycling the organic phase, additionally admixed with fresh alcohol, into the esterification reaction.

Claim 10 (Currently Amended): The process of ~~at least one of claims 1 to 6~~, characterized

in that the volume of liquid removed from the reaction during the esterification by (azeotropic) distillation is made up in whole or in part with the fresh alcohol.

Claim 11 (Currently Amended): The process of ~~at least one of claims 1 to 10~~, characterized

in that tin(II) salts of monocarboxylic or dicarboxylic acids are used as catalyst.

Claim 12 (Currently Amended): The process of ~~at least one of claims 1 to 11~~, characterized

in that a molar ratio of tin to benzoic acid of $10^{-5} : 1$ to $10^{-3} : 1$ is set at the beginning of the reaction.

Claim 13 (Currently Amended): The process of ~~at least one of claims 1 to 12,~~
characterized
in that a polymeric or ceramic membrane, composite membrane or paper filter is used
as filter.

Claim 14 (Currently Amended): The process of ~~at least one of claims 1 to 13,~~
characterized
in that the benzoic acid is esterified to an acid number of <0.1 mg KOH/g, determined
in accordance with DIN EN ISO 2114.

Claim 15 (Currently Amended): A composition comprising benzoic ester(s) and
isononyl benzoate, ~~obtainable~~ prepared by a process of ~~at least one of claims 1 to 14.~~

Claim 16 (Original): The composition of claim 15,
characterized
in that the tin content of the product is below 1 mg/kg.

Claim 17 (Currently Amended): ~~The use of~~ A method of using the composition of
~~one of claims 15 and 16~~ in paints, varnishes, adhesives or components of adhesives or as a
viscosity reducer and/or plasticizer for PVC.